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A work in progress.

Skriftlig reflektion inom självständigt, konstnärligt arbete

Det självständiga, konstnärliga arbetet finns

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Introduction

I am a jazz trumpet player. The trumpet actually accompanied me for the longest part of my life since I was 8 years old. I can not say that it was always the most pleasant or fulfilling relationship, because the trumpet requires, more than any other instrument, a daily routine of practicing and training and will not forgive any insecurities or mistakes. I had hard times with the instrument and I am not as good a player as I might have been if I would have been a little more persistent. Nevertheless without the trumpet and the world of music, that I was able to enter with it, I would not be the same person that I am today and I would not want to miss it. Beyond that the trumpet rewards you for your hard work with an amazing sound, that is able to trigger goosebumps, and a lot of different possibilities to express yourself.

I am also a composer, a passion that came just recently to me and which I am eager to explore and prolong further. A very long time I have not dared to write my own music because I always thought that my skills in that field are not adequate enough to do so. It is right now that I discover how great the possibilities are to actually be the creator of music and not just the interpreter.

It is always a great pleasure and a dream to combine those two skills to accomplish a great work and it is the thing that I did with this project and that I intend to more in the future.

Musical Background

There were only a few concerts, which I remember attending as a small child. But I distinctly remember listening to a brass band which used to play popular songs on an annual public festival in the village where my grandparents live. I think it was then, that I first encountered the trumpet and was deeply impressed by it and its sound. On suggestion of my parents I took first keyboarding lessons in the year 1996 when I was 8 years old. There I learned the basics of music theory and reading music. But I soon discovered that the keyboard or the piano would not be the right instrument for me, because I found the sound of it rather dull and uninteresting. At that time I did not yet see the multiple possibilities of expression that a piano has and I was much more impressed by the trumpet. As chance will have it my local music school just started offering trumpet lessons at that time. So I tried out the trumpet which was a perfect fit for me.

In 1998 I transferred to the “Georg-Friedrich-Händel Gymnasium” in Berlin which has a musical profile and started playing in the classical symphony orchestra there. The 8 years I spent at that school were very inspiring and nurturing for me, because we were able to take part in great projects like concert tours to China, South Africa and Finland and the performance of great orchestral works like Carls Orff’s “Carmina Burana” or the “Liverpool Oratorio” by Paul McCartney/Carl Davis in the prestigious Concert House in Berlin.

At the age of 15 I joined, encouraged by my trumpet teacher Lutz Wolf, the Big Band of the music school Berlin-Pankow “Volles Rohr”. At that time, inspired by the Big Band, I began listening to jazz records like Chet Baker's album “The last great concert” and “Moanin” by Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers. The title song of the latter with the

outstanding trumpet solo of Lee Morgan impressed me deeply. I was hooked by Chet Baker's wonderful lyric and melodic playing and by Lee Morgan's excellent technique and expression on the trumpet. Consequently I, who until that point had mostly a classical background, wanted to learn how to play like that and discovered the world of jazz music and improvisation.

I also started to take part in the study preparation programme of my music school, which offers additional main instrument lessons, piano lessons and music theory courses, although I developed the idea to make music my profession not then but rather late, around the last two years of high school (2006/2007). Around that time I also started my first own band project with friends, which was a Funk Band called "Soul Bubbles", as I was and still am a big fan of the band "Tower of Power".

In 2007 I graduated from high school and started studying Music and Media at the Humboldt University in Berlin. But I had always the goal in mind to take the entrance exams at several German music colleges in the next year. Consequently I worked very hard to achieve this goal: I took trumpet lessons with Achim Rothe, whom I admired as my big band leader, to further develop my improvisation skills. Furthermore I started playing in the Jazz Combo of the music school Berlin-Pankow, the Big Bands of the UdK Berlin and the Free University Berlin, the latin band "Salsa Azul" and above all the Youth Jazz Orchestra of Berlin (BJJO), where I had the honor of taking part in projects with Jonas Schoen and David Friedmann.

In June 2008 I took entrance exams to several German music colleges. I was offered a college place at every school I applied to and decided to study at the "University of Music and Theatre" in Leipzig, which has a very good reputation in jazz education and offers a staff of very good teachers (e.g. Richie Beirach p, Werner Neumann git, Pepe Berns b, Heinrich Köbberling dr,...). Another reason was that Martin Auer, one of Germany's best jazz trumpet players, was the main instrument teacher for trumpet there. At that school I played in some short-living projects and school bands. The most inspiring experience was playing in the so called "Helmut Brandt – Ensemble", which was led by baritone saxophone player and big band leader Rolf von Nordenskjöld (Berlin). This project band was playing arrangements of the late arranger and baritone saxophone player of the RIAS – Big Band Berlin Helmut Brandt, who composed and arranged about 150 pieces for his "Mainstream Orchestra", which was an unusual septet with the instrumentation of 2 flugelhorn, trombone, baritone sax, guitar, electric bass and drums. Brandt's arrangements have a unique sound, very much influenced by Gil Evans and the cool jazz period but also by baroque composer Johann Sebastian Bach. Brandt was furthermore known to use the instruments in unusual ways, an idea that would influence me until today.

In 2008 I also started to play in the Youth Jazz Orchestra of Brandenburg (LaJJazzO) which is led by well known big band leader and trombone player Jiggs Whigham. At the same time I also started working sporadically as a freelance musician, where I played in different projects, for example the bands "Mariachi dos Mundos", "Spielvereinigung Süd" or in the musical "Cabaret". As a rare female trumpet player I also made experiences in show/gala all-women bands, experiences that I would describe as rather unpleasant, because there was often spent too much attention on the outfit and show and too less on the quality of the music. It was then that I decided that I would no longer participate in such projects, which would not set the quality of the music over everything else.

In 2010 I was also offered play in the "German Women's Jazz Orchestra", which is on the contrary a serious all female band project started by the "Deutscher Musikrat" in cooperation with the "Goethe Institut" and the abroad broadcasting company "Deutsche

Welle” and led by German/Polish saxophone player and composer Angelika Niescier. There I had the possibility of performing with many successful female German jazz musicians like Silke Eberhard, Carola Grey, Birgitta Flick and Lisa Stick on tours to Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine and even the Gaza Strip. The latter was one of the most impressive experiences in my life. I was finally realizing what a unique and comprehensive language music is. It is indeed able to be understood by everyone, not depending on their cultural and social background.

In the year 2011/12 I did an exchange year at KMH Stockholm within the Erasmus programme, because I am very interested in the so called “Scandinavian Jazz” which for me is represented by groups like E.S.T., Bobo Stenson Trio, Arve Henriksen, Atomic etc... After a very inspiring composition course there with Joakim Milder I discovered my joy and interest in composing and started playing and recording my own compositions in my own quartet, which gave me a whole new perspective and a new field to work on. After a great year in Stockholm I decided to prolong my stay and finish my Bachelor degree in music there, because of the great advantages that KMH and the experience of Scandinavian music and Stockholm offer to my artistic and personal development.

Right now I am very interested in seeing music and your role in music in another perspective, to step out of your comfort zone and learn and profit from it. I am always looking for inspiration and motivation for new ideas. I intend to master my instrument in my own unique way, so I will eventually find my own voice to express myself.

The Goal for my Project

As a main goal for my exam project I intended to compose the music for new band, a sextet with the instrumentation trumpet, piano, guitar, voice, bass and drums. I aimed to achieve a certain amount of equality between the singer, trumpet, guitar and, to a certain degree, also the piano, bass and drums. I meant to avoid to fall back all too often into the old distribution of rolls for these instruments which is existing in bands with similar instrumentations.

I wanted to achieve that every band member would take responsibility in the music making process and feel as an emancipated part of the group, whereas every part is vital for the expression and equally important. Furthermore no one should be forced to act in a role they might feel obliged to. The musicians should feel free and able to follow their intuition while making music. Eventually this should lead to a consolidated sound and a special interplay between the different members of the band, resulting in a common direction in the music.

With this group I planned to prepare a recording session and a concert, mainly for the reason that a recording gives you a great possibility of documenting and conserving your work in a high quality. A concert on the other hand will, with the included amount of excitement and adrenaline, almost always make you perform better than in every other situation.

Inspiration

I had since the end of the summer semester 2012 played with the thought of extending the quartet setting I have worked with before to achieve a bigger variety of sounds and to have more possibilities different instrumentations.

At first I thought that a guitar would be a good addition to a horn quartet with a piano as a harmony instrument, because the guitar is a very versatile instruments and holds great possibilities in the use of different sounds and effects and in taking different roles in the band context. Furthermore I had not worked very much with guitarists before and I thought that it would also be a great opportunity to learn a little more about this instrument and all its capabilities.

In september 2012, as it was time to decide concretely which kind of project I was going to do for my exam in the following spring, I reflected that it might be a good idea to have an additional melody instrument to the quintet with guitar, piano, bass, drums and trumpet that I was already planning. That could have either been another wind instrument, a violin or any other stringed instrument or simply a singer.

I had listened a lot to Kenny Wheelers CD "Music for small and large Ensemble" which features very different instrumentations from small groups to a big band. But the most interesting point for me in this CD was that Wheeler used the singer Norma Winstone in most of his arrangements in a not singer-typical way, but more like a quality of sound, equal to the other instruments. The singer was not a soloist accompanied by a band as she usually is, but a sovereign part of the band.

In addition to this I visited a very inspiring concert in Fasching with the "Isabel Sörling Farvel Sextett". I admired how well the communication in the band was and how the different sound colors blended together. I also appreciated the possibility to split up the group into smaller groups and to change the generic roles of the different instruments. The idea was born to create a sextet with a singer, trumpet, guitar, piano, bass and drums.

But not with the typical distribution of roles that this setting usually includes: the singer would be mainly another melody instrument to participate to the band sound with its wonderful and unique sound color. The guitar would serve in different functions, sometimes more as a melody instrument, sometimes more as a accompanying instrument and sometimes both. I even attempted to include the piano, the bass and the drums into different roles apart from their rhythmical and accompanying function.

Planning

I started planning of the project quite early in September 2012. I had the idea that the combination of a recording session and a concert in spring 2013 would be a good idea and a destination that I could accomplish. The most important thing at that time was to write and finish the compositions quiet soon, so we would have enough time for developing and rehearsing them in the band before the recording session and the concert.

Luckily I had a very inspired phase in september/october 2012 and managed to create new compositions and finish old sketches, last but not least with the aid of my composition teacher Tommy whom I had lessons with during the autumn semester. I had nearly completed 5 new pieces in the end of oktober 2012, so we could start testing the pieces in the group in the beginning of november. It was then that I was able to gather the new group and I was also able to plan the dates for the recording and the exam concert on the 10th and 11th of April 2013 respectively.

At that time I was also trying to book more concerts for the new band, because I thought it would be a great opportunity for us to play the group together and test ourselves on audiences. An opportunity that rehearsals can not provide in the same extent. I was very lucky because contrary to my expectations I was provided the possibility to play three gigs shortly after one another in March 2013: the 3rd March at the Jazzlab in Fasching,

the 21st March at Lidingö Jazzclub and the 28th March at Hotell Hellsten. That was the perfect opportunity for my band to perform in stage situations.

The dates were set and the goal was to be readily prepared for the first gig on the 3rd of March in Fasching. That included that rehearsal phase would begin in november/december 2012 with sporadic rehearsals to also test out the group and the compositions and to make necessary alterations. The plan was that the compositions should be basically completed and refined in january 2013. Consequently we could start an intensive rehearsal phase with weekly rehearsals in the end of january 2013, so we would be ready to perform in the beginning of march.

Understandably it was not an easy task to gather a group of 6 musicians, who are all also part in other projects, for rehearsals and find dates that would fit everyone for the recording and the concerts. Therefore it was required that the rehearsal work would be most efficient and the planning very thorough.

My Compositions

In the following part I want to investigate and explain my compositions, which I wrote mainly in the period of autumn 2012 for this particular project. This aims mainly to a better understanding of their setup and their inspiration.

Finding Neverland

I started writing Finding Neverland after listening to a version of Steve Kuhn's "Saga of Harrison Crabfeathers", which I like for its simple but brilliant melody and its driving 3/4-meter.

I first came up with some melody fractions which had no real connection to each other and harmonizing ideas for those. This way I developed the intro melody in bar seven, the theme in B and the theme in D respectively. I had the feeling that those unconnected melody phrases, if put in the right order, described an adventurous journey as you can find it for example in fantastic literature like in James Matthew Barrie's "Peter Pan", where the title of the song "Finding Neverland" is originating from. Consequently I went with this idea to combine the different parts: at first there is a call for departure to a journey to fulfill an essential task. After that follows the journey, which is troublesome in the beginning, later leading to conflict and danger, consequently succeeding the task and being victorious.

As all parts are based on the root of G I thought it would be fitting to use this note in a repetitive manner as a driving force and a connecting momentum of the parts which is happening mainly in the guitar.

The C-part, where a dissonant cluster is built, is set inbetween the modest B-part in G minor and the "victorious" D-part in G major to built up a conflict and describe a development between the two different parts.

The solo part is set up to reflect this form with the cluster part in C substituted by a free solo part in bar 89. One could also describe it in the way that the free solo is actually framed by two written parts, which I found was a very interesting idea.

"Finding Neverland" might be the composition where I used the possibilities of the instrumentation of the group the most because it features melodies in two or three parts

and every instrument is somehow actively featured throughout one part of the composition.

S-E-C-H

Initially I had the idea for SECH in a jazz composition class with Joakim Milder which I attended in autumn 2011. There we experimented with transforming names and words into musical notes. I remembered that Johann Sebastian Bach did the same thing when he used the BACH-theme frequently. He used the letters of his last name “Bach”, which all also stand for names of notes (B representing a B flat and H a B natural in German). This was later on also copied by Dmitri Shostakovich, one of my favourite composers, who often adopted the DSCH-motive by using his own initials.

I decided to do the same thing with my own name. There were just four letters who are also equivalent names for notes: S and E from KriStinE and C and H from SCHlicke (S, actually Es, representing an E flat and H representing a B natural in German). Inspired by these four notes I formed a melody just consisting of these.

It was very hard to find harmonies that would fit to the melody, because the tones of the melody are not part of any very commonly known scale, so it is very hard to establish a tonality. Later on my composition teacher Tommy Haglund brought me to the idea that these four notes (E flat, E natural, B natural and C natural) are actually part of a scale which is constructed out of the three major chords C, Ab and E, a symmetric scale with the progression half tone, diminished third, half tone, diminished third...

Consequently I tried to establish this chord/scale as the basic modal tonality of the song. But I soon discovered that this would not work because the melody, in the way it was written before, craved some kind of conclusion and progression in the harmony. So I decided to let the harmony resolve itself into respectively one of the earlier mentioned major chords when the melody allowed it. Inbetween those “resting” points the earlier mentioned constructed scale represented as the slash chords C/Ab, Ab/E and E/C would function as a pivot point and a suspended chord for the then following major chords. To contrast the abstract harmonical and melodic structure I decided to set the song into a more old-fashioned heavy slow swing style. The coda and the intro are each also inspired by the tone material.

In the sextet I decided to divide the melody to the three melody instruments guitar, voice and trumpet to create the impression of a discussion, which later reaches to an agreement by playing the melody in a unison in the repetition. Very late in the rehearsing process we came to the idea to play the first theme presentation rubato, whereas the repetition of the theme, where we all play it in a unison, is set in time. This enhances the earlier mentioned impression from a discussion/conversation to an agreement.

Easter Snow

Easter Snow is actually one of my oldest compositions. I wrote an original version in spring 2008 while attending a jazz workshop in Berlin. I had just learned about the “line cliché”, a chord progression, that features a prominent ascending or descending melody movement in the harmonies (e.G. Cm, Cmb6, Cm6, Cm7...), and I felt inspired to create a song out of it.

Initially Easter Snow was a ballad in a 5/4-meter with a steady melody, consisting mainly of long notes, as a counterpart to the agitated harmonic movements. I was not very

pleased with the outcome of my work at that time because the result seemed hardly playable and overly complicated.

It was just in spring 2012 that I would revise my old compositions in search for new inspiration. I liked the harmonics and the melody of the A-part, so I retained them for the greater part. I just reharmonised the chords slightly to make the base line sound more interesting and animated. In order to make the song rhythmically more interesting I split up the big 5/4-bars into two 5/8-bars respectively to achieve a kind of double time feeling and adjusted the melody and the harmony placements. The bridge was a new addition because I would not want to use the old bridge, which was consisting of complicated chords and meter changes. The new bridge was inspired by the B-part of rhythm changes, whereas I wanted to add more sharpness through the use of the whole tone scale and augmented dominant chords combined with an odd rhythm.

To support the rhythmic and harmonic movement I wrote a steady arpeggiated comp voice for the guitar, while the piano is supporting this more freely with chords. The base is playing a steady baseline to support the 5/8-rhythmicality. The trumpet and the voice present the melody in a unison which splits up into harmonies at certain places.

The title "Easter Snow" was inspired by the fact that it snowed during easter time while the piece was initially written. The dark minor based melody and the melancholic timbre of the harmonics reflect on the frustration I felt when the winter still holds the land in its frosty grip around easter time although it already should be spring.

Karolin

Karolin, a ballad and a voice feature, is the only piece I have ever written lyrics for and it might be my strongest composition so far. Supposedly this is due to its genuine simplicity paired with a good build-up.

The tune is basically consisting of an A- and a B-part whereas the the A-part is very timid and quiet while he B-part is powerful and strong. The intro is a kind a free deliberation over the melody of the A-part, instrumented with a guitar with some sound effects, trumpet and percussion sounds and has the purpose to vaguely hint the melody of the song.

The A-part is hold very simple, just consisting of a short motive in half notes, which is developed later. I deliberately used big intervals in this melody to express a certain amount of emptiness. The harmonics of the A-part are in contrast to the melody ambiguous with not finding a tonal centre and pending mostly between Dm11 and Abmaj7 which are a actually laying a tritonus apart from each other. The lyrics of the A-part describe a situation, where a person is sitting up late at night contemplating about a lost loved person, feeling empty and sad. This is reflected in the empty melody and the ambiguous harmonies.

The B-part is a deliberate contrast to the melancholic atmosphere of the A-part. It is featured with a strong and floating melody which is elevated by powerful harmonies around Bbmaj7 and its mediant chords Dbmaj7 and Abmaj7. I am actually not very happy with the text of the B-part because it turned out a little too slick and profane for my taste. But I would not find the words to express what I wanted in a better way. After the B-part is the solo section following. Simon Berggren, the pianist of the group, had the idea that he would play an unaccompanied piano solo after the first accompanied bass solo, which would be a good variation in the solo part. This would also give him a great chance to build up to the final theme which is set in reverse order with first the powerful B-part followed by the quiet A-part again.

I wrote new lyrics for that last A-part to solve the little story of the person sitting and contemplating and in order to find to a more comforting end.

Dancing on Ice

“Dancing on Ice” started as an experiment with the goal to write a song in an odd meter while making it sound naturally.

From the moment I started working on this song I had the picture of my little sister, who did figure skating at a very young age, in my head. I imagined how it would be to attempt to dance a waltz on the ice and that it might be hard to keep the time because the ice is trickery and slippery. Consequently the melody came very naturally to me in a simple repetitive motive, with some little halts and pauses, like someone dancing on ice would do them.

Thus resulted the idea to set the piece into a 7/4 meter with the subdivision 3+4 which I called a “crooked waltz”. The tone material of the melody basically consists of the B-minor scale with some other keys blended in the later bars when the melody is developing into a climax.

To give the song a more spheric sound I used a basically modal harmonic based upon the G phrygian scale, but is following the melody, when it shortly leaves the key. Striking with the melody is that it is just having an ascending tendency without any conclusion in the end. Thus I added a final conclusion resulting in B-Minor after the melody was repeated.

I decided to set the melody in the guitar, because I felt that it was a good fit. The voice and the trumpet first have a comping function to the guitar melody but later join into the melody to achieve an intensification in the reprise.

The Intro/Outro was added later to help the listener to enter into the spheric atmosphere of the song and to introduce the G phrygian tonality. It is based on the F# minor pentatonic and is played in quarts by the voice and the guitar, featuring a rhythmic displacement to disguise the meter.

Richie and Me

Richie and Me is a very interesting song, which I wrote around december 2011, initially for my quartet, but it seemed to fit very well to the big group, so I decided to take it into the program.

It is based on a particular melodic line which I found through decoding my own full name into notes. This line is played repetitively by the bass and the guitar. The same line is used in the theme, which consists of 8 phrases which are cued in successively.

I rhythmized the melody through rhythmizeing the following quote from Richie Beirach about composing:

”Composing gives you the chance to clarify what’s on your mind. It’s making musical statements. I work on my music for hours and hours, polishing and refining it.

It’s a documentation of each period of my life. I look at the way they have developed over the years. I can see what kind of choices I have made and how I have become more sophisticated and gotten into things that I didn’t see before. It’s like a time capsule. It’s a mirror and it’s better than a diary.”

This was initially a task in one of my composition classes. That is why the song is called Richie and Me.

The piano and up to a certain point also the guitar and the drums act as a counterpart to the melody, partly using the same tone material while the theme is played in a unison by the trumpet and the singer.

Then follows a collective improvisation part, where the tone material of the theme can be used but does not have to be used

After a while, when the time feels right, the bass will start with the baseline again, thus cueing in the reprise of the theme.

Gathering of the group

It is a very important thing to choose the musicians of your band wisely. For me it is of course essential that they are good musicians, who will play my music in the way that I intended to and will enrich it.

It is in this sense not really important that they are technical perfect and very virtuous players. There should be of course a certain amount of technical proficiency so they would be able to play what they intend to and what they hear.

But the most vital thing for me is that the attitude towards music and the aesthetics of sound is similar to my own. Otherwise the work with these people would be quite hard, because it is very difficult to express certain musical feelings or goals in words. The foundation in working on musical expression should be based on a nonverbal communication between the band members. You just should be able to “click” with the group.

Furthermore it is of utter importance that the musicians are reliable persons. That means that they should be basically very responsible regarding their work as a musicians, which implies that they naturally practice on the music for themselves and are punctual and reliable dealing with appointments and deadlines.

Last but not least it is important to gather people that I am comfortable working with. If someone is an outstanding musician, but might be an arrogant and unfriendly person it would be very hard to work with this person. It might fit well together on the musical level but I would always be afraid of making mistakes or not satisfying this person. Thus I would limiting my own ability of playing freely and in the best possible way I can. These are the main aspects on how I chose my band members.

Karoline Wallace was recommended to me by a friend. I was worried to find a singer that would feel comfortable in taking the role as an instrument and improvising freely and not to serve in the usual role of a singer. Luckily Karoline, who was in Stockholm as a exchange student from Bergen this year, was exactly the singer I looked for. She has a beautiful voice and great musical aesthetics. Moreover she had already experience with free improvised music and felt comfortable in the role of an instrument, doing her job very professionally and enriching the band with her inspiring input.

I had known the drummer Hannes Sigfridsson since my first year in Stockholm and I always admired his unique and melodic sound on the drums and his ability to listen very carefully to the music and giving it exactly what it needs. I had played with the thought of including him in a project for quite some time and I was really happy, that he was willing to participate. He added very musical drumming and great inspiration to the band.

Jonas Grumstedt the bass player is a first year student at KMH. I admire him for his great and full sound on the double bass and his very melodic playing. He also turned out to be one of the most reliable and responsible persons when working with the band.

Alf Carlsson the guitar player is also a first year jazz student here at KMH. He has a very great sound on the guitar and a great feeling for energy and improvisation, while being very open for new ideas and approaches. On top of that he is one of the genuinely nicest persons I have ever met.

The choice of the piano player is maybe one of the most important choices for me, because the piano player is somehow my connection to the rhythm group while playing and improvising. So the interaction with the piano player should come naturally and explain itself without words. It had first intended to engage Örjan Carlsson, whom I had the pleasure to work with earlier in my quartet, as a piano player. But Örjan had developed some more or less grave hearing problems in the middle of december 2012 and felt unable to put the required amount of work and effort into the project as needed.

So I decided to ask Simon Berggren, an outstanding and very admired piano player with a very own style of playing the piano and a wonderful sense for the music and its needs. He gladly accepted. It was a very good decision because Simon actually merged the group with and rounded of its sound with his very inspiring and unique playing and his great ideas.

Rehearsing process

We started with the rehearsing in late November 2012 after my compositions were in a state of near completion. The main goal at this time was to test out the compositions in a band context and to try out the interplay and connection between the different musicians.

I initially wanted to start at that time with the thorough rehearsing process but unfortunately it was not possible due to multiple problems: Alf, the guitar player, broke his arm, Örjan the piano player was encountering problems with his hearing and felt unable to play. Furthermore we had general scheduling difficulties, because it is understandably not easy to gather a group of six busy musicians during the Pre-Christmas period. Despite these facts we managed a few rehearsals during November and December 2012 to get acquainted with the material and with each other. It was also very good for me to get a feeling for the songs and to get to know how they sound in a band context and which adjustments might be made to them.

During the Christmas holiday I had the time to contemplate about my songs and to make the necessary changes and adjustments.

In late January 2013 we started rehearsing on a weekly basis in order to be ready to perform on the 4th March at Fasching Jazz Club. We encountered some difficulties while rehearsing the songs. So was it for instance difficult to play the odd meter songs "Easter Snow" and "Dancing on Ice" accurately but freely. "Easter Snow" for instance was based on a fast 5/8-meter clave, but Jonas the base player had difficulties to hold the time and keep up the odd meter, which is totally understandable due to the complexness of the material. We achieved a solution in setting "Easter Snow" into a big 5/4-meter, where two 5/8-bars are combined. The 5/8 clave was just felt as a syncopation of the 5/8 bar. Consequently it was much easier to feel the song and to keep up the time. I was very pleased that we found a solution together in the group through discussing about it and I very much appreciated the ideas of my band members.

“Dancing on Ice” on the other hand is also hard to play because the usual 7/4 clave 4+3 is inverted to 3+4 in order to make it more waltzish and the time is more floating. The trick with this song was to get used to it and to find easy comping patterns and not to play overly complicated.

“Karolin” and “Finding Neverland” came quiet natural to the band, due to the fact that they are created more simple in their structure. In “Finding Neverland I had to explain the concept of the solo form with a free solo framed with written parts thoroughly because it was not so easy to express in the music sheets. But it was eventually understood pretty well and appreciated. The intro of “Karolin” needed some rehearsal work and Alf and me tested out different things. Because it is a free part and I am not very skilled in the different effects of the guitar, we needed time to find the right sound.

SECH was actually also easy to rehearse after the material was understood by all the band members. The most difficult thing with this song was to feel the solo form which is consisting of the odd number of 18 bars and features floating harmonics without a real direction and structural climax. Therefore it was important to play this song constantly to get a feeling for it.

“Richie and Me” was added to the program quiet late in the rehearsing process. The band was already very well established in its sound and the interplay and listening to each other. Consequently the song came very natural to the band and did not need much rehearsal work.

On the other hand it was a challenge to achieve the right band sound in this unusual instrumentation where every instrument had to find its place and its sound in such a big group. This could just be accomplished by constant rehearsing and listening to each other.

As a result the musicians found their places intuitively and were able to alternate and adjust it to the needs of the music

We also had some discipline issues which might have made the rehearsal work less efficient than it could have been, but which is quiet normal when you work with a group of young music students who have many obligations and tasks to fulfill besides the work in this particular band. In order to keep up a good and relaxed atmosphere I was very tolerant and forgiving as I feel that it is essential to keep the group in a good spirit and to not taint this with too much negative energy.

Furthermore it was sometimes difficult to express my thoughts about how the music should sound and where it should go and how to achieve this goal. As I said earlier it is generally very difficult to express an abstract and impalpable thing like music in words. But I was always eager to try until I was understood.

Moreover I often felt presumptuous to tell the drummer or the bass player how to play because I lack the required skills on these instruments to do so. In this cases I just needed to find other ways to express my intentions with methods I can use, usually singing or describing the sound or the intention of the particular passages.

Nevertheless we found our way during this intense month of rehearsing and solved all the problems that appeared collectively, thus achieving that we grew together as a group and reached a unique band sound. We were ready to play and present our work on the 4th March in Fasching.

Concert Period March 2013

Against my expectations I was able to book some concerts for my new band which conveniently were scheduled shortly after each other in March 2013. This gave me and my sextet the great opportunity to test us and my tunes in front of an audience. A concert situation provides a certain level of concentration and energy that you can hardly achieve during a rehearsal.

Our first gig was set on the 4th March at the Jazzlab in the Jazzclub Fasching, where we shared the evening with Samuel Muntlin's Quintet and played one set. Unfortunately we had to play with a substitute on the piano because Simon was on tour in Italy at that time. Fortunately Örjan Carlsson, who had already taken part in some of the first rehearsals and was already acquainted with the material, was willing to substitute for Simon on the gig and the rehearsal weekend before. The gig in Fasching went well, although I was a bit concerned if we could perform at our best due to the substitute and how the music would be received by the audience. But I was actually very pleased with the outcome.

A disadvantage was maybe that, as the second band playing on this evening, we had to fight with a loud chatty audience, a situation which I as the band presenter had not yet learned to cope with and that I possibly could have resolved in a better way. But otherwise I got a good positive response from the people in the audience after the gig. Although I knew that I had to work on my presenting skills, I felt that we had made a good start.

Our next gig was set on the 21st March at the Jazzclub in Lidingö, a very nice place who usually manages to attract a lot of audience. We were yet again set to share the evening with another band: Rasmus Lindelöv 3, so we just played one set. It was the first gig with our actual piano player Simon Berggren and unfortunately we were not able to meet and rehearse before this gig due to scheduling incompatibilities. Nevertheless I thought that this would not be a big problem since Simon was present in all rehearsals in January and February and since the gig at Fasching went so smoothly. Of course there was also a soundcheck before the concert and we had time to talk through the songs, so I actually felt quiet confident and comfortable. The gig went very well the band played better than ever before, more freely and more energetic than at the Fasching gig. Simon integrated himself into the group seamlessly and enriched the music and rounded up the band sound with his free and inspiring piano playing. This was exactly the effect which I was hoping for. I think the audience received the music pretty well although it might have been a little modern for this particular place.

But I actually stand to the opinion that as a jazz musician or musician generally we should always support the contemporary music and perform in front of different audiences to make it known in wider circles. As a musician and a composer I feel obligated to not always perform what the people want but what they need to hear in order to develop further and to not stagnate. For an unexperienced audience it is therefore a good practice to explain the music or its inspiration/intention to them during the presentation or in a program book. This will make the access to the music easier.

The next concert was set one week later on the 28th March at Hotell Hellsten where we had to play for two sets. This meant that we needed to prepare a few more tunes. I decided that it would be the best solution if we would make easy arrangements of my older compositions, which I wrote my quartet during the last year. Fortunately we were able to meet for a short rehearsal before the gig, so we were able to prepare the new tunes. The gig went well, the audience was very appreciative, although the new tunes were a little insecure.

But nevertheless it is these situations, where things do not work out as planned, that make you learn the most and that force you to get creative in order to perform well. It makes you listen more intensely forces you to find intuitive solutions. You suddenly realize that you have to take initiatives in the music or nothing at all will happen.

It was actually very rewarding that we were able to play a few gigs before the big exam concert because it helped the group to grow much closer, to find a common direction in the music, react and listen to each other and of course to solve unexpected situations fast and smoothly.

Recording Session 10th April 2013

On the 10th of April it was time: we were well-rehearsed and well-proved and the compositions had matured a good bit during the work with the band. We were ready to record.

I wanted to record mainly for demo purposes and to document my work. I did not expect to produce a first class CD during just 5 hours of recording for 6 new songs. The kind of music that I write is, as it is improvised in big parts, dependent on many factors like the right atmosphere and energy, the form of the day, the magic of the moment and many other things - and that for six people at the same time. It is therefore hard to reproduce when you just have a little amount of time to record a rather large number of songs. So you have to be willing to make compromises to achieve the best in this situation.

It is fact that the more takes of a song you take the worse the quality of it will get, because the musicians will lose energy and concentration which are essential for a good performance. In this sextet, as in most jazz context, it is custom and necessary to record all instruments at the same time, because the improvised music is created in the moment and every instrument is dependent on the others. Therefore it is harder to correct certain phrases and passages and you have to learn to live with small mistakes.

I was considered not to strain my musicians too much and to rob them of their energy and concentration, so I was not too demanding and settled to be content with versions that were not really perfect but would give a good impression of the music.

Interestingly it is very important in which order you record the songs, because some songs crave more concentration and/or energy than others.

“Finding Neverland” was the first take after we managed to rig everything up in the morning. The energy and the flow was already very good. That is why I decided to leave it with this one version in order to accomplish the other songs, too.

“SECH”, “Dancing on Ice” and “Easter Snow” were more complicated and craving and less intuitive to play so they needed more than one take to be represented well. I was actually slightly displeased with the outcome of “SECH”, but I was convinced that we would not achieve a better version on this day, so I went with it.

“Karolin” is emotionally very craving and it was not possible to record two takes of it after one another. So we had to record another tune inbetween and get back to it later. On proposal of Simon we spontaneously recorded “Richie and Me” which was a very good decision because the band was much more relaxed and able to let go and play more freely.

All in all we managed to record 6 songs in 11 takes with more or less satisfying versions. We were able to keep up a relaxed atmosphere during the recording and nobody was badly dissatisfied with his work.

A recording gives you the chance to listen to yourself and reflect on your own playing which is always very informative and will help you improve a good bit. It was therefore very important for my project to record and I highly appreciated the possibility.

Exam Concert 11th April 2013

The exam concert was set on the 11th April in Lilla Salen at KMH. It was very important for me to be able to present my work live, because in a live situation you will come to a certain point of excitement, that will help you concentrate much more and let the energy flow freely. You can let yourself be completely lost in the music if problems come up you have to solve them intuitively. You do not have any excuses that might come up while rehearsing or recording because the work must be presented in a good way to the audience.

As I pointed out earlier I did not expect to be able to book so many gigs. Since the school offers the possibility to play concerts in the concert halls there, I decided that it was a good idea to set the exam concert there. It is a very convenient place to play because all the technique and the equipment we need is already there and we have the possibility to book a sound engineer. Because of that I did not have to think much about the planning and transporting of the equipment to the place and was able to concentrate on my job as artist and musician, which was very helpful in an examination situation. On top of that we had also the possibility to record the concert in a professional way.

I must say that I think that this exam concert was the best concert so far that we ever played in this group. The band was highly concentrated, the energy flew freely, the interaction and the listening between the musicians was very good.

The long process of planning, rehearsing, playing and recording payed finally off and I had the feeling that the band finally grew together to a unity. The audience received the music very well and it was a great pleasure to play with the group.

I must say that my presentation skills are something that I have to work on more because I still felt very insecure moderating in between the songs and my explanations were hesitating

But musically I think that we reached the best outcome that we could possibly reach.

On my struggle of being a bandleader

During the time rehearsing with my band and during the concert period I encountered some difficulties that made me considerably doubt my eligibility as a band leader. I am not a natural leader or a person that can assert my opinions very well. Quite the contrary: I am rather introverted and a person who rather avoids conflicts than embracing them. This features of my personality made it hard for me to take the leading role and make decisions and take responsibility for the whole group.

In addition to this it is inevitable that you build up a social relationship with the people you work with and that it is nearly impossible to separate it from the professional relationship to these persons while working together. Consequently, in order to avoid conflict, I would refrain from pointing out certain things that might come up during the work progress to not endanger the atmosphere or my friendly relationship with this person.

It was for example the issue that we had problems holding up the discipline during the rehearsal time. As we had very little rehearsing time it was my intention to use it as efficiently as possible. But this was not always possible due to the fact that people would come late, would not be prepared or just be unconcentrated during the rehearsals. Of course I understand these problems as we are all human beings and also very busy music students who have to focus on different projects and lessons. Nevertheless I felt that it was my task to motivate and inspire the group in those times and to take the leading part. But somehow I felt that I lacked the ability to do so.

On the other side I also had confidence issues: being confident about my work, myself and also confident into the group, as to if they will manage to interpret my music as I intended and if we will all be able to pull together. This lack of confidence led to the fact that I was doubting my work and my pieces and also sometimes my ability to express my thoughts regarding the music and establish my own opinions.

Furthermore I felt that some things in the band context exceeded my knowledge and my skills. As a trumpet player I am not very skilled in playing the drums or the bass and the problems that might derive from that. So I needed to find other ways to express myself: singing, explaining the sound, giving known examples, etc...

I have the opinion that the work in a band should be a democratic and collective process because everyone has different skills and opinions and only if everyone feels free and confident to express those we will have a good and balanced end result. I expressed to my band members on many occasions that I do not intend lead the rehearsals and the refining process totally by myself, because I am very eager to let them express their opinion and let them contribute with their knowledge and skills. This will have a much better outcome than a band led entirely by myself.

Of course I was willing to fulfill the administrative work like booking rooms, rehearsals, providing the materials and organizing the concerts because it is my project, but I am not entirely responsible for the artistic work, a point where I have to be able to rely to great parts onto my musicians. In that way the work will be much better, more balanced and easier, because every musician has the chance to feel comfortable and rediscover himself in the music.

I can say that I learned a lot about myself and my abilities as a bandleader. I am more confident about my work now and I know that I have to let it go and rely on my band musicians in order to let it develop. Moreover I learned that the best way to attack problems is to see them in another light with more relaxation and ease. Everything will actually work out somehow in the end and in music as in everything in life you can control the outcome just to a certain point and have to let go to reach improvement.

Conclusion

In conclusion I managed to create a great new band, my own sextet, which I wish to continue to work with in the future. I was able to plan the whole process, to compose my own songs, to rehearse them, to present and even to record them. That is a big achievement that I am proud of and that I should not reduce although I also had some difficulties.

I was able to compose music for a sextet and I feel that the music developed in the way that I intended it to. The singer became an integrated instrumental part of the band. The voice, the guitar and the trumpet built a melody section and the piano, bass and drums

built the rhythm section. Nevertheless the groups were not strictly determined in that way. Sometimes the guitar, trumpet or the voice would occupy a more accompanying function, while the piano and to a certain point also the bass or the drums would have a melodic function.

Of course it is hard to overcome the old roles of the instruments in the band context completely, because every instrument has limited possibilities of expression and is therefore not eligible for every task. But it was not my intention to abandon these roles completely but to experiment with different settings and to give every instrument an equally important task.

I certainly achieved an amount of emancipation of every instrument in the group. Everyone was free to take initiatives and to let the music develop in his or her intention. It was even essential and important to take initiatives in order to allow progression at certain places. Nevertheless the group strived for a common direction in the music. The interaction and the listening to each other was thoroughly developed. We were able to form a certain sound in the group and reached a great level of interaction and cooperation.

Through the process I learned a lot about myself, my music, about what I actually want and about being a bandleader.

I learned that I am very dependent on my musicians and a good and relaxed working atmosphere and that I will not perform well if I do not feel comfortable and secure in the group. Furthermore a very important thing was that I learned to let go and to not be afraid to lose control at some points in order to allow freedom and development.

I now know more precisely which kind of sound I strive after in the band: a lyric elegant sound, which can be very fragile but also very energetic.

I got to know my own compositions much better, as they have the tendency to develop themselves on their own during the rehearsal work and turn out more or less differently than the initial sketches

Furthermore I grew more accustomed to the role of a bandleader and gathered important experiences that will help me in the future. I memorized that I should be more relaxed if difficulties occur or things do not happen the way I intended. Moreover I should trust and rely more on other people, trust in their taste and their knowledge and their virtues as band work is always a team job and you have to be able to let go and have trust into the others in order to grow together in the group.

This project has taught me a lot and I can say that I have come a long way and was able to further develop my musical and social skills. I will of course have to continue working on myself in the future and I will gladly start new projects and intensify the work with the old ones in order to keep on learning and always trying to improve myself.

I think that I reached my set goals to create a new group with a great and unique sound and a stylistic and aesthetic language that lies somewhere between jazz, pop and free improvisation.

Despite these facts the work on this project, as in life, is a work in progress, a work that will never be completely finished. This is a good thing, because if we would never strive to improve ourselves and be willing on working on us we would never achieve change and development. We just have to always remind ourselves that every work we do is just a snapshot in time – a short moment in an ever evolving, developing universe.

Closing Words

In the introduction I claimed that I am a trumpet player and a composer, a testimony that might not be quite correct. As a musician I will never be really finished and accomplished because it is just not possible and it also would not be a good thing. Every end is just the beginning of another episode and so will the end of my bachelor studies in music just be the beginning of the next part of my life. I am more than ever eager to discover music and develop my skills, artistically and technically. I had a great start into the world of music with this opportunity of education and I highly appreciate the trust and work that other people put in me, confident that I eventually will succeed.

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